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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON TOGO'S FLOODING SITUATION

REF: A. LOME 394

1B. LOME 391

1C. LOME 387

11. SUMMARY: France and the UNDP are undertaking evaluation missions of flood damage. The GOT has held a number of crisis meetings and has begun to evacuate the population most at risk. Togo's Disaster Relief Committee has been activated. The GOT has still not provided the donor community with the promised list outlining specific emergency needs. END SUMMARY.

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FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

12. FRANCE: French engineers have been in the country since July 31 to assist the GOT with damage assessment. A plane carrying light civil engineering equipment to help with preliminary bridge surveys is in Togo together with a Puma. The French have told us that the GOT has already requested the helicopter remain in Togo for at least another 2-3 days.

13. A French Embassy official told Pol/Mil Officer that France has not yet decided to what extent it will be able to assist the Togolese and has made no concrete promises to rebuild the three washed out bridges on Route 1. He suggested that all potential donors should be focusing on obtaining bridges from their respective governments as nothing was definitive yet from the French side. While the road infrastructure damage was catastrophic for commerce and transport, he did not think the situation was catastrophic yet from a humanitarian standpoint. He offered that the situation was "less bad than could have been initially feared."

14. UNDP is also actively assessing the humanitarian situation on the ground in Togo. UNDP experts deployed across Togo again on August 1 to continue and update its assessment of the situation. (Note: The UNDP is a member of Togo's Disaster Relief Committee-ORSEC. End Note.)

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GOT activities:

15. MEETINGS: After flying over the flooded area the previous day (July 30), President Faure convened a "crisis meeting" of all concerned ministers July 31 to instruct them to get assistance moving to those needing and focus on repairing the bridges. The Public Works Minister advised that he was meeting the same day with contractors to get the gap repaired on the bridge at Togble Kope twenty kilometers out of town on the main North/South highway (ref A) and to see what can be done on the principal bridge washed away farther north at Amakpave. Participants discussed the water rising in the

eastern parts of Lome, and the President told two ministers to go to the area right away. A further meeting was held later the same day to recap where things stand. One concern was that, until the highway bridges are repaired, food will start to become scarcer in the capital city, and prices will rise.

¶6. In other activity, residents whose homes have been flooded in the Lome area were evacuated July 31 to several emergency centers. The Public Works Minister said that his personnel were working to open up areas isolated by flood waters elsewhere in the country. At the same time Public Works personnel are working on alternate routes for vehicle traffic. One especially sad consequence of the flooding is that Togo's phosphate mining operation is under water completely, and damage has been estimated to be particularly severe. Phosphate is Togo's chief export.

¶7. ORSEC ACTIVATED: The GOT has activated its Disaster Relief Committee, ORSEC, on July 31. The Committee, presided over by the Minister of Security and Civil Protection and seconded by the Minister of Territorial Administration, brings together, under one authority, all coordination efforts for emergencies and catastrophes. The Committee is currently evaluating Togo's needs and is drawing up a list of required assistance. The Chief of Togo's Navy told Pol/Mil Officer on August 1 that he had lent two zodiacs and two teams of six sailors to the ORSEC committee. The zodiacs he said, would stay in the coastal region for now and serve to rescue victims in the Lome-Aneho area.

¶8. COMMENT: The flooding situation is changing daily. As water recedes in some areas, overflowing rivers are spilling over into secondary channels creating new flooding areas. We will be visiting affected areas over the weekend to determine whether to issue the Ambassador's Emergency Disaster Relief cable.

TWINING